

**Gulf of Mexico Alliance Implementation & Integration Workshop**  
**Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Network**  
**July 17 – 19, 2006**  
**Gulf of Mexico Program**  
**New Orleans, Louisiana**

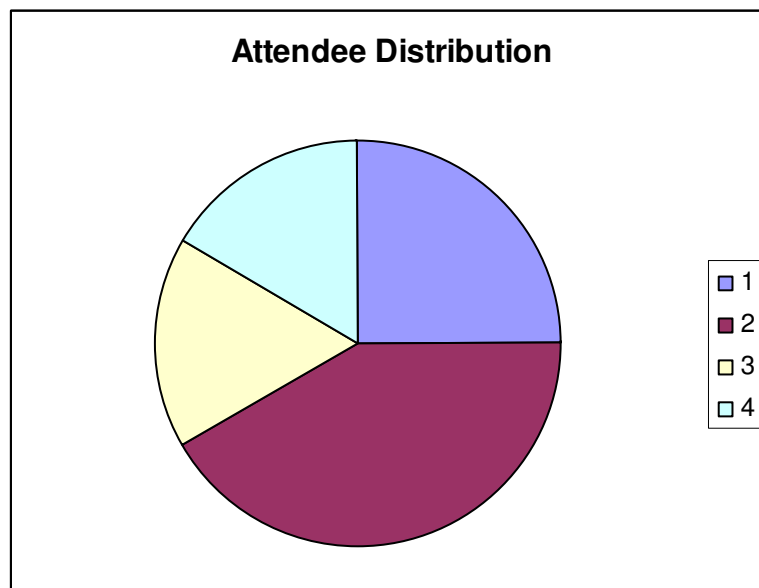
## **Workshop Summary**

### **Introduction**

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Network (EEN) has two primary goals within the *Governor's Action Plan for a Healthy and Resilient Coast*. Within those two goals are nine action blueprint commitments over the initial 36-month term of the Alliance. A Gulf of Mexico Alliance Implementation and Integration workshop took place in New Orleans on July 17-19, 2006. All five Gulf of Mexico Alliance Priority Issue Teams (PITs), including the EEN, met to discuss the implementation of the *Governors' Action Plan*. The EEN continued its discussion on an Alliance communication strategy and EEN organization. The workshop was hosted by the Gulf of Mexico Program.

### **Attendees**

Roughly 14 people participated in the workshop with other attendees briefly joining the sessions through the course of the program. Of the attendees, the representation of various groups is indicated in the pie chart.



1 = Other: NEPs, NERRs, aquariums, NGOs, media, and similar organizations

2 = Federal Agencies

3 = State Agencies

4 = Education Organizations such as Sea Grants and Universities

## Agenda

The purpose of the meeting was to continue the work of the newly established Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Network (EEN). The group was formalized at the June 21-23, 2006 Rookery Bay NERR meeting held in Naples, Florida. The New Orleans meeting was tightly focused on the communication components of the EEN to include the website/clearinghouse, public relations survey, and underserved underrepresented communities. In addition, the Environmental Education Coordinator (Lee Yokel) for the EEN was onboard as of July 5, 2006.

An overarching communications strategy specific to the EEN needs to be developed in conjunction with some of the specific actions of the *Governors' Action Plan*. Those include the role of the EEN Coordinator, network organization, and how the EEN interacts with the rest of the Alliance. Due to the impending nature of the Gulf of Mexico Program's request for proposals (RFP), three key issues were addressed in this meeting toward fulfilling the RFP.

## Initial Outcomes

### *Website / Clearinghouse*

A discussion regarding the future Environmental Education Network Website and Clearinghouse covered several points.

- Do not reinvent the wheel;  
An inventory of existing websites needs to identify those resources that already exist and can be utilized. A needs assessment should be conducted within the Network to also identify what the members want the site to do. The website will serve as an identity and should be interactive, user friendly, and not "static".
- Clearinghouse—relationship with Website?  
The USGS is currently searching, vetting, and writing metadata on a variety of environmental educational resources. A node within the National Biological Information Infrastructure will be available to link directly to the website so the information will be searchable online.
- Other points of discussion  
Noted sites such as the National Science Teachers Association and National Marine Educators Association should be reviewed thoroughly. Functions of the site could include a listserv, bulletin board, profiling, and other functions.

Next steps will include formalizing a working group, conference call for timeline development, and conversations with partners (NOAA, USGS).

### *Public Awareness Campaign*

A key component in the Governors' Action Plan is increasing awareness and stewardship of Gulf Coast resources. A key goal for the EEN is a public awareness campaign. Many aspects of a

public awareness campaign were discussed through the course of the meeting. During the discussion period several key points were revealed. It is the intent of the EEN Coordinator to hire a contractor with pertinent expertise to guide the EEN through the public awareness campaign. To that end, development of surveys, products, brands, messages, and or other materials will be through a professional organization and not alone by the EEN or Alliance. Discussions addressed the following points.

- Needs Assessment / Analysis

A review of past and current public awareness campaigns needs to be conducted to establish what has and has not been effective. These need to be analyzed for connections to Alliance issues and potential useful tools in the campaign.

- Public Survey

To establish a point from which to measure campaign success, a baseline knowledge survey needs to be conducted on selected Alliance themes. It is a critical step in “doing your homework” before proceeding to campaign development.

- Social Marketing

Once the survey is complete, what the selected target audiences understand will provide the basis for developing the campaign. In addition, social marketing will tailor the needs to the target audience, identifying barriers and ways to overcome them for message delivery. A key to success identified is to be very specific on the target audience(s).

- Initial Timeline (modified in DISL GMP proposal)

By October 2006: collect background info on needs assessments, public survey, and media campaigns already done (develop template to gather this information)

By December 2006: synthesize the information

By December 2006: Gathering resources/potential marketing and/or PR firms

By March 2007: identify audiences and draft scope (develop specifications)

- Target Audiences

By reviewing the *Governors' Action Plan*, other issue groups, the EEN three target audience groups were identified as elected and appointed municipal officials, 6<sup>th</sup> grade students and teachers, and media professionals from communities in the U.S. Gulf States with a population size of 35,000 or less.

## Priority Issue Themes

As the Environmental Education work group discussed the Public Awareness Campaign, they asked the other issue groups to develop three priority themes, their target audiences for said themes, and to establish a member of their group to interface with the EEN. In the event that the groups were not able to address the topics during the workshop, the Education group brainstormed some options. These are not branding exercises. The themes will be used as part

of the public awareness campaign to help develop survey questions and campaign messages. The results of this process are as follows.

### *Water Quality*

#### Environmental Education Suggestions

1. What are HABs and why should I care?
2. What can a citizen do to improve water quality?
3. Are you involved in a water quality monitoring effort in your area? If so, in what manner?

#### Water Quality Group Discussions

- What are HABs [harmful algal blooms] and why should I care?
- Existence of HAB threats from more than red tide - we suspect nutrients as a factor in most blooms
- Beach/shellfish water quality - What does a beach advisory mean?
- Community involvement - What can a citizen do to improve WQ?
- Are you involved in a WQ monitoring effort in your area? If so, what is it?
- Estuarine low-DO and the loss of fisheries resources
- The “Bigger Picture”
- Stormwater - watershed connectivity – “everyone is downstream” idea
- Take care of the Gulf, and it will take care of you (i.e., a healthy Gulf provides you a job and high quality of life)

Conversations focused on two big directional questions:

- (1) are we trying to let the public know how they can protect themselves (e.g., not eat contaminated shellfish; how to read a beach advisory) and/or how they can change behaviors to protect the resource (e.g., don't over fertilize your lawn).
- (2) are we trying to educate the public about our three WQ issues (HABs, beach water quality, WQ monitoring) and/or are we working at a broader level driving home that healthy ecosystems make people's lives better.

Audiences: General public in Gulf States, regulators and managers, political arena

Liaison: Kris Shipman

### *Nutrients*

#### Environmental Education Suggestions

1. What are the nutrient issues in coastal communities and why should I care?
2. As a citizen, how can I help with nutrient reduction?
3. What is hypoxia and why is it bad?

Audiences: Coastal residents and the general public

Liaison: Doug Daigle

## *Priority Needs for Habitat Identification*

### Environmental Education Suggestions

1. How do citizens access data or information from a central source?
2. What are habitats and why should I care?
3. What natural and human-influenced factors affect habitats?

### Habitat Group Discussions

- Assist in increasing awareness and value of Habitat Identification activities
- Participate in Gulf User Workshops for the development of the Habitat Identification system (PHINS)
- Assist in targeting potential data users and data providers includes Fed, States, local, academic, NGO, private sector, media, etc.

Target Audiences: Resource Managers, Permitting and regulatory staff, Policy and decision-makers (all), Educators, General Public

Liaison: Larry Handley

## *Restoration*

### Environmental Education Suggestions

1. What is wetland restoration and why should I care?
2. As a citizen, how can I become involved in wetland restoration?
3. How can I be better prepared and what are the risks of natural hazards?

Target Audiences: General Public

Liaison: Quentin Dokken

## **Underserved and Under Represented communities**

The Governors' Action Plan calls for the development of a pilot program to engage underrepresented and underserved communities in Gulf stewardship activities related to the Alliance. Several EEN participants have initiated actions toward enhancing existing programs or investigating new pilot programs.

A discussion and brainstorming session covered several components of a potential pilot project. These were: field-based experience; teacher professional development components; standardized evaluation tools pre- and post- testing; types of evaluation tools and portfolios; number of students, locations around the Gulf including Mexico; costs; and follow-up to the programs.

Underserved was recognized as, “economically disadvantaged, rural (regardless of ethnicity)” and underrepresented as, “groups underrepresented in science (minorities, women, and disabled persons).”

## Next Steps

The next steps for the Environmental Education Network include drafting and formalizing a communications strategy and organizational framework. In addition, the following specific actions will develop in the next three months:

- ✚ Develop working groups for the Awareness Campaign, Website / Clearinghouse, and Underserved Communities actions of the GOMA Environmental Education Network
- ✚ Submit proposals to the Gulf of Mexico Program's current Request for Proposals
- ✚ Wendy Sera, Kacky Andrews, and Lee Yokel to brief the Ocean Education IWG (joint subcommittee of JSOST and SIMOR).